

# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Updated 4-7-09**

## **GENERAL QUESTIONS:**

### **When is the best time to call the Lab if you have a question?**

Late morning or early afternoon is the best time. Early mornings can be very busy with in-processing samples and preparing reports. Our lunch time is usually 12:30 – 1:00. The Lab is open from 7:30 -4:00. Our phone number is 573-592-4074.

### **Why would samples be discarded by the Laboratory before screening tests are done?**

Samples are discarded if:

They are over 30 days old.

They have no evidence tape or the evidence tape is compromised.

The client name does not match the DOC number written on the Chain of Evidence and someone with the same DOC number or name is in the district or institution.

The label or Chain of Evidence is unreadable due to extremely poor penmanship or leached ink due to a leaking sample. Exaggerated penmanship styles may be pretty to look at but can be very difficult to read.

The urine quality has been compromised with excessive mold, blood, feces or other bacterial contaminants.

The Chain of Evidence form is not sent to the Laboratory.

### **How much urine should be in the specimen bottle for drug testing?**

Ideally, as much as possible. When you send a short sample the Laboratory can usually run the screening test. If the sample is positive it would require additional urine to have GC/MS confirmations done. Sending at least a half a bottle of urine would usually be enough for most situations.

### **What color ink should I use on the sample bottle labels?**

Blue or black ink is the best choice. Many times those who use red ink will then put the red evidence tape over it so that it is impossible to read the writing. Use ink that does not run when wet as some samples leak and then the label cannot be read.

### **Why should I use the narrow evidence tape and standard bottles?**

The wide tape or excessive use of narrow tape makes it difficult for the laboratory personnel to open the bottles to pour the sample. Remember that we often have more than a 1000 samples in a day to pour so having bottles that are difficult to open only slows down the process. Sixty bottles are usually put in each tray so if you send non-standard larger bottles they may not fit in the tray. Taller bottles make the trays difficult to store stacked in the freezer. Wrapping evidence tape around the bottle lid, rather than over the lid, makes opening the bottle very difficult.

### **Should the sample bottle lids be initialed by the collector or the client?**

No - It is not required. If the sample bottle lid is initialed in such a way that the Laboratory cannot write their bottle number over it, each lid has to be covered with a label. This is an unnecessary step that should be avoided. Avoid using evidence tape with printing on it for the same reason.

### **Does it matter when the samples are received at the Laboratory?**

Samples received at the Laboratory by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month, with a collection date of the previous month, will be counted with the previous month's allotment. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of the month all samples will be counted towards the current month's allotment irrespective of the collection date. There can be **no exceptions** to this policy. See Offender Drug Testing Policy D 5-7.1 Section III B 24.

### **How long does the Laboratory keep samples?**

Negative samples are kept for approximately one week. Offender Drug Testing Policy D 5-7.1 Section III F 4-5 states: "Confirmed positive specimens will be kept in frozen storage for 6 months from the test date, after which will be discarded, unless a specimen is involved in litigation, in which case it will be retained until no longer needed. Unconfirmed positive specimens will be kept in frozen storage for a minimum of 45 days from the test date, after which they will be discarded." Reviewing the screening results promptly allows you plenty of time to request confirmation of your samples. If you are seriously considering the possibility of revocation in the future you should have the positive screening results confirmed while we still have the samples in the freezer.

### **Is the Chain of Evidence form included in court hearings?**

The Chain of Evidence Form is part of the Court Packet that is presented as evidence in a hearing. It is important that the form is filled out completely and legibly. It should include the full name of the client, not their initials. If On-site test results are to be included on the Chain of Evidence form or you have medication lists or other comments they should be written **ONLY** in the comment section of the form. Laboratory confirmation results (date and drugs confirmed) are recorded in the boxes below the drug names and it is often difficult to fit them in the box when there is a large X, + or check mark already there.

### **What is a Court Packet?**

This is the paper work we can provide to those going to court. It includes information such as the summary of Laboratory practices, technologist's certificates of training, AAB Certification of Proficiency, Chain of Evidence, calibration and controls of the biochemical analyzer, initial testing results for the client, GC/MS confirmation results and the final report. It often can be admitted into evidence in lieu of testimony of the Laboratory personnel if requested in a timely manner. A second copy is sent, to be forwarded to the defense attorney, so the attorney can review it prior to the court date and advise their client wisely. It can require many hours to put together so allow adequate time to have it prepared.

### **Why should positive screening results be confirmed?**

Screening results are a general test that can be positive for a class of drugs not the individual drugs you are looking for. False positives are also possible. Writing a violation to later find out that the positive screening result "Failed to Confirm" can cause problems. GC/MS confirmation looks for the ions of select drugs so there is no possibility of a false positive. According to Offender Drug Testing Policy D 5-7.1 Section III G 7, "Probation and parole violations/notice of citation reports will not recommend revocation for positive drug results without confirmation, or unless the offender admits use."

## **How do I request a confirmation of a positive result?**

Fill out a Drug Confirmation Test Request form (attachment D of Offender Drug Testing Policy D 5-7.1) and fax it to 573-592-0654. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, we would prefer to not take confirmation requests over the phone. A completed Request form would still need to be submitted as soon as possible. Faxing it in before noon will often have a faster result.

The Offender Drug Testing Policy D 5-7.1 Section III F 9, 9a, and 9b states: “Specimens submitted by probation and parole districts, community release centers and community supervision centers will require authorization from the chief administrative officer/designee in order for them to be confirmed. A completed Drug Confirmation Test Request form (Attachment D) must be submitted to the laboratory in order for a sample to be confirmed. If a probationer or parolee admits to drug use, urine specimens need not be tested or confirmed.”

If the client was collected at a **different location** than where they are currently being supervised please indicate that on the request form. The original Chain of Evidence forms are filed by District, Institution or Release center. Within that file they are sorted by collection date. If the date or location is incorrect it is very difficult to find the Chain of Evidence needed for confirmation without searching the records for the correct information.

## **Where do I find the form to request confirmation of a sample?**

If you can't find a copy of the Drug Test Confirmation Request in your office you can find it as attachment D to the Offender Drug Testing policy D 5-7.1. It can also be found on the K drive. Go to Policy and Procedures, then Forms and Attachments, and then Forms Images. Look for the form 931-4349, a Microsoft Word document. You can also call the Lab and one will be faxed to you.

## **Can we fax a confirmation request to the laboratory before the sample arrives at the lab?**

Please **DO NOT** send the request before we have the sample at the Lab. Sending a confirmation request before you have the screening results may be a waste of time as our results may differ from your On-site results. Sending a confirmation request before the Lab receives the sample causes the laboratory staff to have to look for the sample every day until it arrives. When the Lab is busy it is difficult to find time to look for the “missing samples”. If you have a positive On-site result that you would like to have confirmed as soon as possible, if the screening test at the lab is positive, send the confirmation request attached to the top left corner of the back of the chain of evidence form with a **paper clip**. This way the person doing the drug screening has the information at hand when removing the positive samples from the negatives and will send the sample to be confirmed immediately. Usually it is best to wait to review the screening results and then fax the confirmation request for those drugs you need confirmed.

## **Should I fax a second request for confirmation if I had faxed a request for confirmation but don't see any results?**

It would be better to call and inquire if we received the fax rather than fax a second one. Often times the original fax is with the Chain of Evidence in the confirmation lab or waiting to be filed after completion of the confirmation while the staff is searching for it in the other room. It just wastes the Laboratory staff's time. Alternatively, you could e-mail or fax a note asking if the original was received.

## **Do we pay extra for GC/MS drug confirmation tests that we request?**

No.

### **Do we do confirmation testing every day?**

GC/MS confirmation testing of Opiates, Propoxyphene, Methadone and Benzodiazepines usually have the best results if the samples are prepared and allowed to sit overnight. Other drugs can be extracted the same day they are screened, but are only tested if there are sufficient samples to make it cost effective to do so. Ethyl Glucuronide samples may only be run once a week.

### **I can see that the sample has been confirmed in OPII but why can't I see the comment?**

In **ITXL** select the sample that you wish to view. If there is a Y under the C column for a drug that means there is a comment, not that it has been confirmed for the drug. Press the F4 key (fold) and the comment will appear. You can have the result without waiting for the final report in the mail. **ITOX** only shows you the results of the last sample tested, which may not be the last sample collected if more than one sample was sent in at the same time.

### **When do the testing results upload to OPII?**

During the evening the day's results are uploaded. Any confirmations reported out that day will be available the next day on ITXL.

### **Does the Laboratory enter On-site results in OPII?**

No. If there are On-site results that you are interested in knowing more about, look in ITXL for the name of the requesting employee for that collection. That person is the one you need to ask about those results.